

that discussion right now. All know that the 2001 authorization passed in the days after 9/11 to enable us to go after the attack perpetrators is badly in need of an update after 13 years. Despite its facial language only allowing military action against those complicit in the 9/11 attacks, it has been broadly interpreted to authorize a global war against Al Qaeda or associated forces so long as they pose a threat to the United States or any of its dozens of "coalition partners." That AUMF 13 years later has no geographic limitations. It has no expiration date. Members of the administration have testified in Senate hearings that they expect the war declared in that AUMF may go on for the next 25 or 30 years.

I wasn't here in 2001, but I have no doubt that the Members of Congress who voted for that authorization never would have contemplated war lasting into the 2030s or 2040s, and the American public has never expressed support for such a notion of perpetual war.

But the threat posed to the United States and our allies by nonstate terrorist organizations, whether it is ISIL or Al-Qaeda or Boko Haram or Al Nusra or others, is real and it has grown; and the very nature of the threat is quite different from the old notion of nation state military power that was our standard challenge even through the end of the 20th century.

In a speech in May of 2013 to the National Defense University, President Obama recognized that the administration and Congress have to work together to examine and update the 2001 AUMF in order to narrow its scope, clarify what it allows, and make it suitable for the new challenges that are before us. I have heard many of my colleagues in this body say exactly the same, but there has been no progress on this necessary update. The administration has made no proposal. There is no AUMF revision under active consideration in either House. Strangely, while all acknowledge the authorization needs an update, we drift from crisis to crisis—Syria, Iraq, POW exchanges—without grappling with the underlying document that initiated our entrance into war 13 years ago.

We cannot afford further delays in tackling this important task. So as I conclude, I encourage all of us, Congress and the administration, to embark on the work of updating the 2001 authorization to reflect the current dimensions of our security challenges. The administration should send to Congress a proposal for a revised and narrowed authorization that specifies how the United States should seek to counter threats posed by groups such as ISIL. There will be a role for the military and there will be a role for counterterrorism activities carried out by our intelligence agencies. There will be a role for diplomacy and there will also be a role for development assistance to eliminate the conditions of desperation that so often breed fanaticism. But it is time for those roles to

be clearly described so they can be publicly debated and ultimately adopted by Congress.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

#### TRINITY SITE RECOGNITION

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Thank you very much, Madam President, and I thank my colleague from the Foreign Relations Committee for a very good speech on a critical issue that our Nation faces right now.

On July 16, 1945, the first atomic bomb was exploded at the Trinity site in New Mexico. For residents of the Tularosa Basin, it marked the beginning of decades of cancer, chronic illness, and suffering that continues to this day.

Next month there will be a candlelight vigil organized by the Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium. Folks will once again gather as they have done now for each year for the past 5 years. They will stand shoulder to shoulder, they will light candles, and they will remember. They will remember that an injustice was done and has yet to be righted.

The Trinity explosion paid little attention to surrounding communities. Radioactive debris fell from the sky, killing cattle, poisoning water, poisoning food, the air we breathe. The damage was done and would remain long after the test was finished, for generations. The suffering it caused is very real and so is the sadness, disappointment, and anger. Attention was not paid then, but it must be paid now.

That is why I have introduced legislation in this Congress to amend the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act to recognize the Trinity site, to include the New Mexicans who have suffered for decades, who still wait for justice, who still wait for compensation from the Federal Government for their injuries almost 70 years later—still waiting.

We cannot change the past. We cannot restore the lives of those who have passed away or erase the years of health problems, the years of suffering endured by too many and for too long, but fair compensation will make a difference and provide badly needed help.

The original RECA legislation required years of work on the ground. My father helped lay the groundwork for RECA a quarter of a century ago. Through his work with radiation exposure survivors and their families, compiling stories and records and histories of victims, the Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium continues this critical work and I encourage them to keep up the fight.

This is a bipartisan effort and driven by simple fairness for American citizens who should have been helped but were ignored instead. Our bill would expand the downwind exposure area to include seven States from the Trinity and Nevada test sites and would in-

clude Guam from the Pacific side. It would also help post-1971 uranium miners to be eligible for compensation and it would fund a critical public health study of those who live and work in uranium development communities.

I will continue to push for this legislation. It is the right thing to do, and we should get it done.

When folks gather in Tularosa and stand together as candles flicker in the New Mexico sky, we will take a moment and remember those who have been affected by cancer, who have been brought down by radiation-related diseases, and we will remember those who passed away and those who continue to suffer. We offer our prayers and support to those who are still fighting. We stand with you. We know you have suffered. We know justice has not been done, and we will not rest until it is.

I wish to commend the Tularosa Downwinders Consortium, folks such as Tina Cordova and the late Fred Tyler, who will be greatly missed—great advocates, dedicated, committed, and refusing to give up. Thank you for making your voices heard, making your stories known, and for not giving up the fight. Together we will work for fairness until the day comes that we can stand together in Tularosa and light candles of celebration that justice has been done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

#### FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I wish to talk today about a couple of issues. This first issue I will address concerns the first freedom and the First Amendment in this country, a matter which people in other parts of the world are seeing in jeopardy, and that is freedom of religion.

I read an article from the BBC about the current status of Meriam Ibrahim. Just 2 days ago she was acquitted of her death sentence in Sudan, and many people in this building and around the world applauded her release. She was sentenced to death because she would not disavow her Christian faith. In fact, for months she had been held in prison. She gave birth to a child while she was in prison, and she had a young child with her while she was in prison. The birth of the baby, and then the early months of the baby's life, was the determining factor as to when she would be first beaten and then hanged because she would not disavow her faith.

Two days ago, she and her two children were set free. She is the wife of a naturalized U.S. citizen. She had been imprisoned by this government, and unfairly so. Many of my colleagues have been working to secure her release. Last month Senator AYOTTE and I sent a letter to Secretary Kerry urging him to offer and provide political asylum for her immediately. We should not have to provide asylum for her

family. Her husband is a U.S. citizen, and because of that both her children are U.S. citizens. Because of her faith, she had been sentenced to death.

The State Department wondered how much jurisdiction it had in this case, and so Senator AYOTTE and I sent another letter to both the State Department and Homeland Security—that agency has the ability to allow people to leave a country or come into a country.

On Monday, it looked as though the situation was moving in the right direction. She had reportedly been acquitted and was set free. She was allowed to join her husband and their children at the airport, but yesterday when they tried to leave the airport, news outlets reported she was rearrested. I hope by rearrested they mean she was detained for paperwork, but the Sudanese Government needs to let her go.

If they are so concerned about the issue of faith and don't want someone there who is willing to promote another faith—or at least live another faith—they should at the very least let her leave the country. I think asylum in the United States for her U.S. citizen husband, her U.S. citizen children, and her is appropriate. That way the danger they feel they face by someone who is willing to profess another faith would be gone.

I cannot imagine why the Sudanese Government would not allow her to leave the country, and I encourage them today to release them.

NBC News reported:

The NISS, a shadowy and feared institution, said on its Facebook page that Ibrahim and her family had been attempting to travel to the U.S. with documents from the Embassy of South Sudan, which split from its northern neighbor in 2011 after years of civil war. It said she was carrying a U.S. visa, and that her attempts to use the documents were considered a “criminal offense.”

Apparently the documents were purportedly—at least according to this news report—from South Sudan. But those documents should have been enough to let her leave and should not have been considered another criminal offense.

These authorities have told reporters that Meriam Ibrahim was using a valid travel document issued by the Embassy of South Sudan, and then suddenly her valid travel documents were deemed not valid.

The State Department, I hope, is doing everything it can to work with the Sudanese Government to ensure that this family is able to come back to the United States. This continued harassment over someone's faith has to end. We need to be doing everything we can. Her husband is a U.S. citizen and her children are U.S. citizens. This is an American family and Sudan should let them leave and let them leave now.

If this were the only time something such as this happened, it would be a terrible problem, but this injustice takes place in so many countries around the world. Apparently the one

faith you can't profess is the Christian faith.

When news of Meriam's death sentence came to light, it was about the same day there were reports of another American citizen, Pastor Saeed Abedini, who had been beaten badly in a hospital in Iran. He was there because of his faith. He was taken to an Iranian prison that was notoriously known as the most dangerous prison you could possibly be in in Iran.

Last year I joined with 11 of my colleagues—at the time Secretary Clinton was leaving—urging Senator Clinton to use every resource we had to release him as well. Our government condemned the Iranian Government for his prosecution.

He converted to Christianity as a teenager before moving to the United States with his wife. He established some churches that were underground churches in that country.

In 2009, he was arrested for so-called Christian activities. He was released on bail. He agreed not to continue his work with the underground churches, but as he was traveling back and forth between the United States and Iran in recent years, he was working to establish nonreligious orphanages in Iran.

In September of 2012, he was detained after he lawfully came into Iran through Turkey. He is now serving an 8-year jail sentence on charges related to his Christian faith, and all the while he has been interrogated intensely and beaten to the point where he was taken to the hospital and then he was beaten in the hospital. After that, he was taken to the most dangerous prison you could take a person to in Iran.

The activities I have just described cannot be allowed to continue. I don't know how we can move forward with talks with the Iranians and not ask them for such a simple gesture that would allow this U.S. citizen to come back to the United States—and don't kill him in one of your prisons or hospitals. It would show a sign of a good-faith effort as we continue to have these discussions.

I hope the President will step forward, along with the Secretary of State, and talk about these grave abuses of human rights.

Last year the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reported out a bipartisan bill to appoint a special envoy for the purpose of promoting religious freedom among religious minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia. The House has already passed this bill.

This continued violence—particularly against Christians—against all religions that governments are in disagreement with is deeply disturbing. It defies the freedoms we hold dear.

When people's rights to their own religious beliefs are abused in the Middle East or Sudan or anywhere else, the United States of America should be the first country to step up and say: We are going to do whatever we can to ensure more religious freedom, and in this particular case, to ensure that the

Ibrahim family—in prison in Sudan—is able to leave and Pastor Abedini is able to leave Iran.

#### AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. BLUNT. The other matter I wish to talk about for just a few minutes deals with the disappointing answer Senator ALEXANDER and I got this week from a request we made several days ago about a processing center near St. Louis where the employees have stepped forward and basically said this was a processing center for the Affordable Care Act. One group that may not be able to afford the Affordable Care Act—among many others—may be the taxpayers. These employees stepped forward and said they were really not doing anything.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported this morning:

Whistleblower allegations last month that claims workers slept, read or played games at Wentzville invoked a flurry of questions from Missouri's congressional delegation.

Moving on with their story, they cite one of the whistleblowers as saying:

We played Pictionary. We played 20 Questions. We played Trivial Pursuit.

She estimated she processed six applications the entire month of December.

CMS, while not acknowledging any of those allegations, said it “has adjusted Serco's work to accommodate changing operational needs.” That is sort of a nonanswer answer.

If we want the government to work more effectively, the government has to be responsive to the Congress.

Mr. President, I unanimous consent to have my letter printed in the RECORD.

This letter is dated June 17, but we had to call them yesterday to see if they were ever going to respond. They stamp-dated this a few days ago, but we certainly have not received anything.

I understand the Affordable Care Act is not going the way the administration had hoped, but that doesn't mean they can continue to pretend there are applications where there are no applications or work where there is no work or contracts that have not performed.

This is a British company that was already in trouble with the British Government that has not performed there. It appears to be one of the considerations to get a \$1.25 billion contract here.

I wish to have answers to these questions. I know many in the Congress wish to have answers to their questions. They wish to ask questions rather than to have to listen to whatever information the administration would like to give.

I think the entire Missouri congressional delegation is interested in this, as are people who are wanting the taxpayers to be protected and for people to have access to health care they can afford and that meets the needs of their family.